

CARIBBEAN SOLIDARITIES:

CUBAN AND HAITIAN MUTUAL AID NETWORKS IN RELIEF AND RECOVERY EFFORTS

THE 2010 EARTHQUAKE

On January 12, 2010 a magnitude 7 earthquake struck the island nation of Haiti in an event that can only be described as a catastrophe. In the disaster's wake, the relief effort required complicated logistics compounded by the destruction of communication, sanitation and transportation infrastructure. Moreover, leadership in the local government, the UN presence and the catholic church had been killed, foreclosing the possibility of collaboration with institutions on the ground (Romero, 2010; Holguin-Veras et al., 2012). As relief poured into the country, NGOs that partnered with local networks (known as Collaborative Aid Networks) were most able to distribute supplies effectively (Ibid.). This development prefigured both collaboration and tension between NGOs and Hatian communities, the exploration of which is the subject of my paper.

AFFECTED POPULATION

Most of the vulnerability and thus the destruction from the earthquake was located in the nation's capital of Port-au-Prince. As with many disasters, populations already experienceing dispossession or exploitation were particularly vulnerable, but overall urban areas suffered more than rural areas (Schuller, 2016).

KEY ISSUES

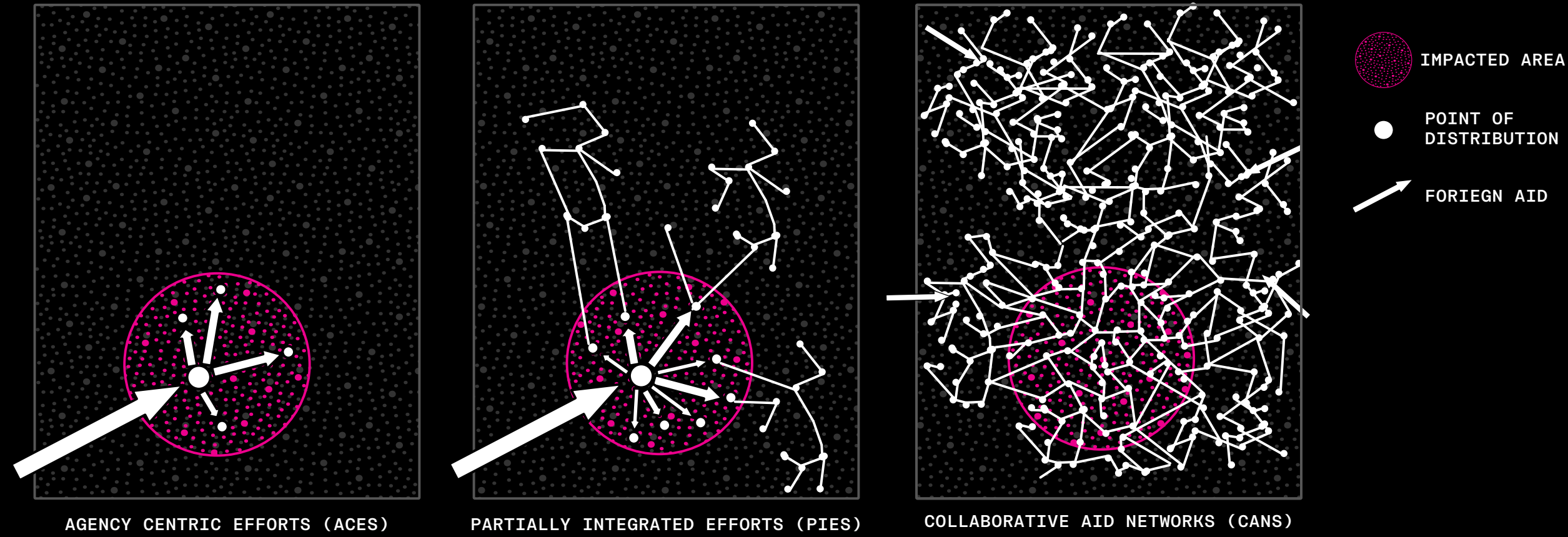
Humanitarian Logistics, mutual aid, solidarity, resistance, neocolonialism, imperialism, sanctions, political activation.

METHODOLOGY

I conduct a literature review comprised of both humanitarian organization-oriented and social science oriented sources. In drawing from both NGO and local analyses, I hope to locate practices that could foster a less colonial approach to disaster response. I also place Cuba's disaster response system in conversation with these emergent practices of mutual aid: in many ways, what theorists learned in the aftermath of the Haiti disaster was already implemented, in a top-down manner, by the Cuban government, which is highly successful at limiting damage and human casualties from disasters (Castellanos Abella, 2008).

FINDINGS

The outcome of Haiti's weak government and the extended presence of NGOs on Hispaniola has led to many to refer to Haiti as a Republic of NGOs - a nation that has become too dependent on humanitarian aid to develop independently (Schuller, 2007). Despite this pattern, examples of solidarity and capacity-building persist in Haiti.



Schematic of ACES, PIEs and CANS (J. Holguin-Veras et al., 2012)

ROOT CAUSES	DYNAMIC PRESSURES	UNSAFE CONDITIONS	CRISIS
Colonialism and the legacy of enslavement Economic marginalization Foriegn occupation Fragile government Globalization and neoliberal powers, including loans and debts Inequality	Poor building codes Lack of land tenure Fragile infrastructure Acute poverty Ubanization Deforestation and land degradation Social inequality	Precarious settlements (on slopes, etc) Informal settlements Poor sanitation, hygiene and health Food insecurity Low food stock/ food savings Absence of social insurance	60k-300k lives lost Trauma, physical and mental injury Infrastructural and building loss Loss of government capacity Loss of livelihoods Displacement Cholera
Progression of vulnerability in Haiti (based on Wisner et al. (2003).			
SOURCES OF RESILIENCE			
Access to aid from government and humanitarians Psychosocial factors such as spirituality, solidarity, collectivism and human capabilities Connection to social movements, mutual aid and other forms of resistance			



Graffiti in Port-au-Prince describes NGOs as crooks, corrupt, and liars (Daniel Morel, 2012)



Cuban medical personnel were the first to arrive after the earthquake (Kirk & Kirk, 2010)



Supplies are airdropped in to Port-au-Prince in the days following the earthquake. This practice would later be discontinued in favor of more dignified delivery modes



In the aftermath of the earthquake, rubble prevents large trucks from distributing aid (RIBI Image Library, 2010)

After the quake, praise becomes resentment in Haiti. (n.d.). Center for Public Integrity. Retrieved April 7, 2021, from <https://publicintegrity.org/accountability/after-the-quake-praise-becomes-resentment-in-haiti/>

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